



EXHIBIT 9
DATE 1-19-07
HB 2

MONTANA ADVOCACY PROGRAM, INC.

The Civil Rights Protection & Advocacy System for the State of Montana

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January 19, 2007

Joint Appropriations Committee for Health and Human Services
Rep. Edith Clark Chair

RE: Implementing a suicide prevention program

Dear Madam Chair and Members of the Committee,

The Montana Advocacy Program endorses funding for a comprehensive statewide suicide prevention program.

As advocates for people with mental illness, we would like to share these observations:

- People call MAP to ask for the suicide hotline number (800-273-TALK).. The suicide hotline number should be as easy to find as 911 and the child abuse reporting line, yet a survey of telephone books from around the state found that no directory advertised a suicide hotline. With no state funding, Montana's "statewide" suicide line is unable to advertise because it would be unable to handle the increased volume of calls.
- *Montana's Suicide Prevention Plan*, at page 6, reports "a shortage of mental health treatment facilities . . . a severe lack of appropriate comprehensive outpatient services . . . a severe shortage of psychiatrists, especially child and adolescent psychiatrists" in Montana.
- We need community services that are available, affordable and results-oriented. Mental illness is deadly, with almost one out of five people with bipolar disorder and 15% of people with untreated depression ending their lives in suicide. Effective treatment can substantially decrease the risk.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of this important initiative.

Yours truly,

Anita Roessmann

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